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In Side of the Old Lutheran Church in 1800, York, Pa. A watercolor by a local artist depicts the interior of one of the numerous churches that flourished after independence. While the choir sings, a man chases a dog out of the building and another man stokes the stove. The institutionalization of religious liberty was one of the most important results of the American Revolution.



FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How did equality become a stronger component of American freedom after the Revolution?
- How did the expansion of religious liberty after the Revolution reflect the new American ideal of freedom?
- How did the definition of economic freedom change after the Revolution, and who benefited from the changes?
- How did the Revolution diminish the freedoms of both Loyalists and Native Americans?
- What was the impact of the Revolution on slavery?
- How did the Revolution affect the status of women?

Born in Massachusetts in 1744, Abigail Adams became one of the revolutionary era's most articulate and influential women. At a time when educational opportunities for girls were extremely limited, she taught herself by reading books in the library of her father, a Congregational minister. In 1764, she married John Adams, a young lawyer about to emerge as a leading advocate of resistance to British taxation and, eventually, of American independence. During the War of Independence, with her husband away in Philadelphia and Europe serving the American cause, she stayed behind at their Massachusetts home, raising their four children and managing the family's farm. The letters they exchanged form one of the most remarkable correspondences in American history. She addressed John as "Dear friend," and signed her letters "Portia"—after Brutus's devoted wife in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. Though denied an official role in politics, Abigail Adams was a keen observer of public affairs. She kept her husband informed of events in Massachusetts and offered opinions on political matters. Later, when Adams served as president, he relied on her advice more than on members of his cabinet.

In March 1776, a few months before the Second Continental Congress declared American independence, Abigail Adams wrote her best-known letter to her husband. She began by commenting indirectly on the evils of slavery. How strong, she wondered, could the "passion for Liberty" be among those "accustomed to deprive their fellow citizens of theirs." She went on to urge Congress, when it drew up a "Code of Laws" for the new republic, to "remember the ladies." All men, she warned, "would be tyrants if they could." Women, she playfully suggested, "will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

It was the leaders of colonial society who initiated resistance to British taxation. But, as Abigail Adams's letter illustrates, the struggle for American liberty emboldened other colonists to demand more liberty for themselves. All revolutions enlarge the public sphere, inspiring previously marginalized groups to express their own dreams of freedom. At a time when so many Americans—slaves, indentured servants, women, Indians, apprentices, propertyless men—were denied full freedom, the struggle against Britain threw into question many forms of authority and inequality.

Abigail Adams did not believe in female equality in a modern sense. She accepted the prevailing belief that a woman's primary responsibility was to her family. But she resented the "absolute power" husbands exercised over their wives. "Put it out of the power of husbands," she wrote, "to use us as they will"—a discreet reference to men's legal control over the bodies of their wives, and their right to inflict physical punishment on them. Her letter is widely remembered today. Less familiar is

John Adams's response, which illuminated how the Revolution had unleashed challenges to all sorts of inherited ideas of deference and authority: "We have been told that our struggle has loosened the bands of government everywhere; that children and apprentices were disobedient; that schools and colleges were grown turbulent; that Indians slighted their guardians, and negroes grew insolent to their masters." To John Adams, this upheaval, including his wife's claim to greater freedom, was an affront to the natural order of things. To others, it formed the essence of the American Revolution.

DEMOCRATIZING FREEDOM

THE DREAM OF EQUALITY

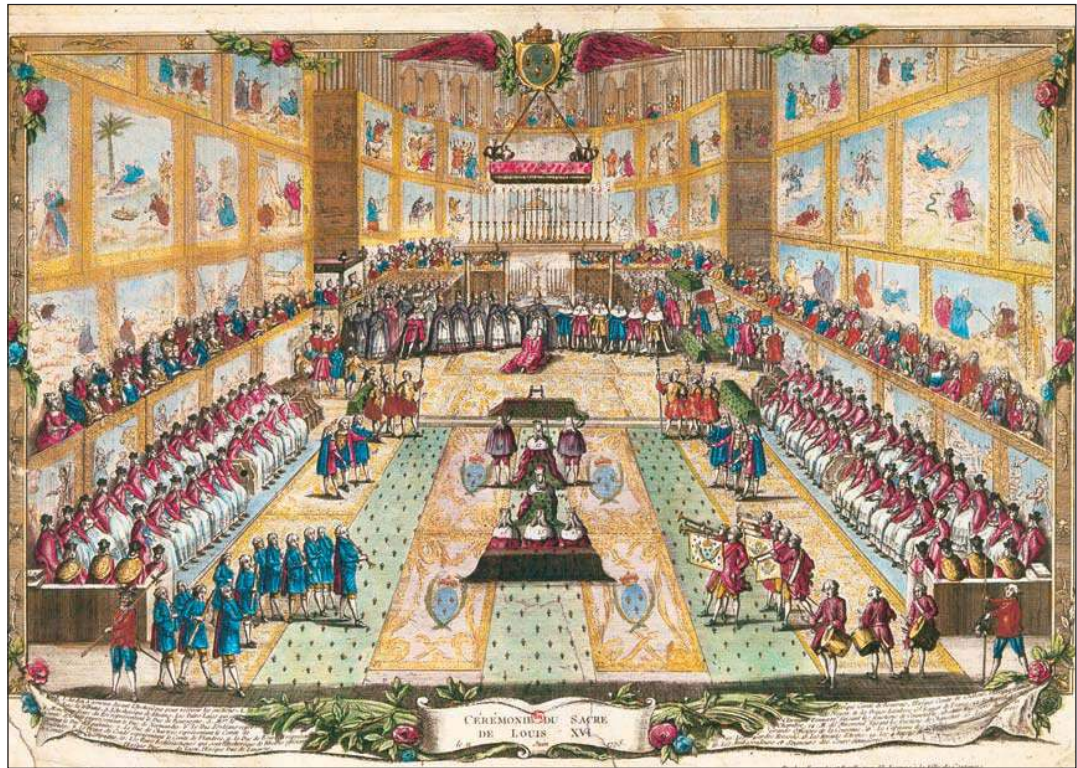
The American Revolution took place at three levels simultaneously. It was a struggle for national independence, a phase in a century-long global battle among European empires, and a conflict over what kind of nation an independent America should be.

With its wide distribution of property, lack of a legally established hereditary aristocracy, and established churches far less powerful than in Britain, colonial America was a society with deep democratic potential. But it took the struggle for independence to transform it into a nation that celebrated equality and opportunity. The Revolution unleashed public debates and political and social struggles that enlarged the scope of freedom and challenged inherited structures of power within America. In rejecting the crown and the principle of hereditary aristocracy, many Americans also rejected the society of privilege, patronage, and fixed status that these institutions embodied. To be sure, the men who led the Revolution from start to finish were by and large members of the American elite. The lower classes did not rise to power as a result of independence. Nonetheless, the idea of liberty became a revolutionary rallying cry, a standard by which to judge and challenge home-grown institutions as well as imperial ones.

Jefferson's seemingly straightforward assertion in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal" announced a radical principle whose full implications no one could anticipate. In both Britain and its colonies, a well-ordered society was widely thought to depend on obedience to authority—the power of rulers over their subjects, husbands over wives, parents over children, employers over servants and apprentices, slaveholders over slaves. Inequality had been fundamental to the colonial social order; the Revolution challenged it in many ways. Henceforth, American freedom would be forever linked with the idea of equality—equality before the law, equality in political rights, equality of economic opportunity, and, for some, equality of condition. "Whenever I use the words *freedom* or *rights*," wrote Thomas Paine, "I desire to be understood to mean a perfect equality of them. . . . The floor of Freedom is as level as water."



Abigail Adams, a portrait by Gilbert Stuart, painted over several years beginning in 1800. Stuart told a friend that, as a young woman, Adams must have been a "perfect Venus."



Americans have frequently defined the idea of freedom in relation to its opposite, which in the eighteenth century meant the highly unequal societies of the Old World. This engraving, *The Coronation of Louis XVI of France*, reveals the splendor of the royal court, but also illustrates the world of fixed, unequal classes and social privilege repudiated by American revolutionaries.

EXPANDING THE POLITICAL NATION

With liberty and equality as their rallying cries, previously marginalized groups advanced their demands. Long-accepted relations of dependency and restrictions on freedom suddenly appeared illegitimate—a process not intended by most of the leading patriots. In political, social, and religious life, Americans challenged the previous domination by a privileged few. In the end, the Revolution did not undo the obedience to which male heads of household were entitled from their wives and children, and, at least in the southern states, their slaves. For free men, however, the democratization of freedom was dramatic. Nowhere was this more evident than in challenges to the traditional limitation of political participation to those who owned property.

In the political thought of the eighteenth century, “democracy” had several meanings. One, derived from the writings of Aristotle, defined democracy as a system in which the entire people governed directly. However, this was thought to mean mob rule. Another definition viewed democracy as the condition of primitive societies, which was not appropriate for the complex modern world. British thinkers sometimes used the word when referring to the House of Commons, the “democratic” branch of a mixed government. Yet another understanding revolved less around the structure of government than the fact that a government served the interests of the people rather than an elite. In the wake of the American Revolution, the term came into wider use to express the popular aspirations for greater equality inspired by the struggle for independence.

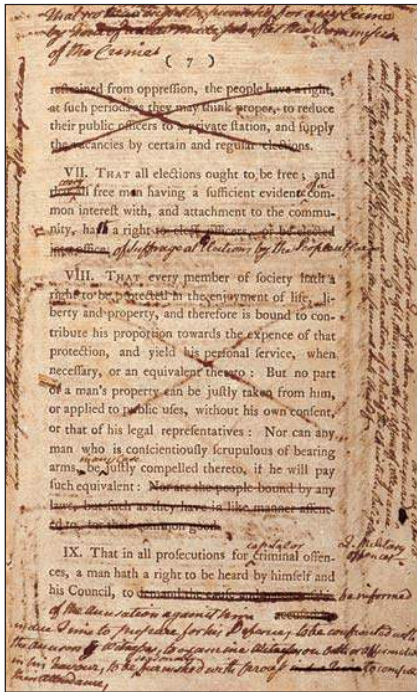
“We are all, from the cobbler up to the senator, become politicians,” declared a Boston letter writer in 1774. Throughout the colonies, election campaigns became freewheeling debates on the fundamentals of government. Universal male suffrage, religious toleration, and even the abolition of slavery were discussed not only by the educated elite but by artisans, small farmers, and laborers, now emerging as a self-conscious element in politics. In many colonies-turned-states, the militia, composed largely of members of the “lower orders,” became a “school of political democracy.” Its members demanded the right to elect all their officers and to vote for public officials whether or not they met age and property qualifications. They thereby established the tradition that service in the army enabled excluded groups to stake a claim to full citizenship.

THE REVOLUTION IN PENNSYLVANIA

The Revolution’s radical potential was more evident in Pennsylvania than in any other state. Elsewhere, the established leadership either embraced independence by the spring of 1776 or split into pro-British and pro-independence factions (in New York, for example, the Livingstons and their supporters ended up as patriots, the De Lanceys as Loyalists). But in Pennsylvania nearly the entire prewar elite opposed independence, fearing that severing the tie with Britain would lead to rule by the “rabble” and to attacks on property.

The vacuum of political leadership opened the door for the rise of a new pro-independence grouping, based on the artisan and lower-class communities of Philadelphia, and organized in extralegal committees and the local militia. Their leaders included Thomas Paine (the author of *Common Sense*), Benjamin Rush (a local physician), Timothy Matlack (the son of a local brewer), and Thomas Young (who had already been involved in the Sons of Liberty in Albany and Boston). As a group, these were men of modest wealth who stood outside the merchant elite, had little political influence before 1776, and believed strongly in democratic reform. Paine and Young had only recently arrived in Philadelphia. They formed a temporary alliance with supporters of independence in the Second Continental Congress (then meeting in Philadelphia), who disapproved of their strong belief in equality but hoped to move Pennsylvania toward a break with Britain.

As the public sphere expanded far beyond its previous boundaries, equality became the rallying cry of Pennsylvania’s radicals. They particularly attacked property qualifications for voting. “God gave mankind freedom by nature,” declared the anonymous author of the pamphlet *The People the Best Governors*, “and made every man equal to his neighbors.” The people, therefore, were “the best guardians of their own liberties,” and every free man should be eligible to vote and hold office. In June 1776, a broadside (a printed sheet posted in public places) warned citizens to distrust “great and over-grown rich men” who were inclined “to be framing distinctions in society.” Three months after independence, Pennsylvania adopted a new state constitution that sought to institutionalize democracy by concentrating power in a one-house legislature elected annually by all men over age twenty-one who paid taxes. It abolished the office of governor, dispensed with property qualifications for officeholding, and provided that



John Dickinson's copy of the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776, with handwritten proposals for changes. Dickinson, one of the more conservative advocates of independence, felt the new state constitution was far too democratic. He crossed out a provision that all "free men" should be eligible to hold office, and another declaring the people not bound by laws that did not promote "the common good."

schools with low fees be established in every county. It also included clauses guaranteeing "freedom of speech, and of writing," and religious liberty.

THE NEW CONSTITUTIONS

Like Pennsylvania, every state adopted a new constitution in the aftermath of independence. Nearly all Americans now agreed that their governments must be republics, meaning that their authority rested on the consent of the governed, and that there would be no king or hereditary aristocracy. The essence of a republic, Paine wrote, was not the "particular form" of government, but its object: the "public good." But as to how a republican government should be structured so as to promote the public good, there was much disagreement.

Pennsylvania's new constitution reflected the belief that since the people had a single set of interests, a single legislative house was sufficient to represent it. In part to counteract what he saw as Pennsylvania's excessive radicalism, John Adams in 1776 published *Thoughts on Government*, which insisted that the new constitutions should create "balanced governments" whose structure would reflect the division of society between the wealthy (represented in the upper house) and ordinary men (who would control the lower). A powerful governor and judiciary would ensure that neither class infringed on the liberty of the other. Adams's call for two-house legislatures was followed by every state except Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Vermont. But only his own state, Massachusetts, gave the governor an effective veto over laws passed by the legislature. Americans had come to believe that excessive royal authority had undermined British liberty. They had long resented efforts by appointed governors to challenge the power of colonial assemblies. They preferred power to rest with the legislature.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The issue of requirements for voting and officeholding proved far more contentious. Conservative patriots struggled valiantly to reassert the rationale for the old voting restrictions. It was ridiculous, wrote one pamphleteer, to think that "every silly clown and illiterate mechanic [artisan]" deserved a voice in government. To John Adams, as conservative on the internal affairs of America as he had been radical on independence, freedom and equality were opposites. Men without property, he believed, had no "judgment of their own," and the removal of property qualifications, therefore, would "confound and destroy all distinctions, and prostrate all ranks to one common level." Eliminating traditional social ranks, however, was precisely the aim of the era's radical democrats, including the most influential promoter of independence, Thomas Paine.

The provisions of the new state constitutions reflected the balance of power between advocates of internal change and those who feared excessive democracy. The least democratization occurred in the southern states, whose highly deferential political traditions enabled the landed gentry to retain their control of political affairs. In Virginia and South Carolina, the new constitutions retained property qualifications for voting and authorized the gentry-dominated legislature to choose the governor.

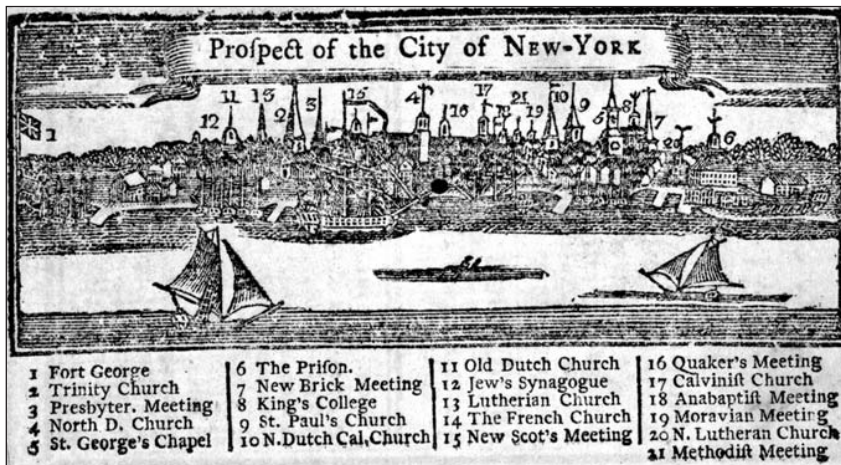
Maryland combined a low property qualification for voting with high requirements for officeholding, including £5,000—a veritable fortune—for the governor.

The most democratic new constitutions moved much of the way toward the idea of voting as an entitlement rather than a privilege, but they generally stopped short of universal suffrage, even for free men. Vermont's constitution of 1777 was the only one to sever voting completely from financial considerations, eliminating not only property qualifications but the requirement that voters pay taxes. Pennsylvania's constitution no longer required ownership of property, but it retained the taxpaying qualification. As a result, it enfranchised nearly all of the state's free male population but left a small number, mainly paupers and domestic servants, still barred from voting. Nonetheless, even with the taxpaying requirement, it represented a dramatic departure from the colonial practice of restricting the suffrage to those who could claim to be economically independent. It elevated "personal liberty," in the words of one essayist, to a position more important than property ownership in defining the boundaries of the political nation.

DEMOCRATIZING GOVERNMENT

Overall, the Revolution led to a great expansion of the right to vote. By the 1780s, with the exceptions of Virginia, Maryland, and New York, a large majority of the adult white male population could meet voting requirements. New Jersey's new state constitution, of 1776, granted the suffrage to all "inhabitants" who met a property qualification. Until the state added the word "male" (along with "white") in 1807, property-owning women, mostly widows, did cast ballots. The new constitutions also expanded the number of legislative seats, with the result that numerous men of lesser property assumed political office. The debate over the suffrage would, of course, continue for many decades. For white men, the process of democratization did not run its course until the Age of Jackson; for women and non-whites, it would take much longer.

Even during the Revolution, however, in the popular language of politics if not in law, freedom and an individual's right to vote had become interchangeable. "The suffrage," declared a 1776 petition of disenfranchised North Carolinians, was "a right essential to and inseparable from freedom." Without it, Americans could not enjoy "equal liberty." A proposed new constitution for Massachusetts was rejected by a majority of the towns in 1778, partly because it contained a property qualification for voting. "All men were born equally free and independent," declared the town of Lenox. How could they defend their "life and liberty and property" without a voice in electing public officials? A new draft, which retained a substantial requirement for voting in state elections but allowed virtually all men to vote for town officers, was approved in 1780. And every state except South Carolina provided for annual legislative elections, to ensure that representatives remained closely accountable to the people. Henceforth, political freedom would mean not only, as in the past, a people's right to be ruled by their chosen representatives but also an individual's right to political participation.



A 1771 image of New York City lists some of the numerous churches visible from the New Jersey shore, illustrating the diversity of religions practiced in the city.

TOWARD RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

As remarkable as the expansion of political freedom was the Revolution's impact on American religion. Religious toleration, declared one Virginia patriot, was part of "the common cause of Freedom." In Britain, Dissenters—Protestants who belonged to other denominations than the Anglican Church—had long invoked the language of liberty in seeking repeal of the laws that imposed various disabilities on non-Anglicans. (Few, however,

included Catholics in their ringing calls for religious freedom.) We have already seen that some colonies, like Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, had long made a practice of toleration. But freedom of worship before the Revolution arose more from the reality of religious pluralism than from a well-developed theory of religious liberty. Apart from Rhode Island, New England had little homegrown experience of religious pluralism. Indeed, authorities in England had occasionally pressed the region's rulers to become more tolerant. Before the Revolution, most colonies supported religious institutions with public funds and discriminated in voting and officeholding against Catholics, Jews, and even dissenting Protestants. On the very eve of independence, Baptists who refused to pay taxes to support local Congregational ministers were still being jailed in Massachusetts. "While our country are pleading so high for liberty," the victims complained, "yet they are denying of it to their neighbors."

CATHOLIC AMERICANS

The War of Independence weakened the deep tradition of American anti-Catholicism. The First Continental Congress denounced the Quebec Act of 1774, which, as noted in the previous chapter, allowed Canadian Catholics to worship freely, as part of a plot to establish "popery" in North America. But a year later, when the Second Continental Congress decided on an ill-fated invasion of Canada, it invited the inhabitants of Quebec to join in the struggle against Britain, assuring them that Protestants and Catholics could readily cooperate. However, predominantly Catholic Quebec preferred being ruled from distant London rather than from Boston or Philadelphia. In 1778, the United States formed an alliance with France, a Catholic nation. Benedict Arnold justified his treason, in part, by saying that an alliance with "the enemy of the protestant faith" was too much for him to bear. But the indispensable assistance provided by France to American victory strengthened the idea that Catholics had a role to play in the newly independent nation. In fact, this represented a marked departure from the traditional notion that the full rights of Englishmen only applied to Protestants. When America's first Roman Catholic bishop, James Carroll of Maryland, visited Boston in 1791, he received a cordial welcome.

THE FOUNDERS AND RELIGION

The end of British rule immediately threw into question the privileged position enjoyed by the Anglican Church in many colonies. In Virginia, for example, backcountry Scotch-Irish Presbyterian farmers demanded relief from taxes supporting the official Anglican Church. “The free exercise of our rights of conscience,” one patriotic meeting resolved, formed an essential part of “our liberties.”

Many of the leaders of the Revolution considered it essential for the new nation to shield itself from the unruly passions and violent conflicts that religious differences had inspired during the past three centuries. Men like Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton believed religion necessary as a foundation of public morality. But they viewed religious doctrines through the Enlightenment lens of rationalism and skepticism. They believed in a benevolent Creator but not in supernatural interventions into the affairs of men. Jefferson wrote a version of the Bible and a life of Jesus that insisted that while Jesus had lived a deeply moral life, he was not divine and performed no miracles. In discussing the natural history of the Blue Ridge Mountains in his book *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he rejected the biblical account of creation in favor of a prolonged process of geological change.

SEPARATING CHURCH AND STATE

The drive to separate church and state brought together Deists like Jefferson, who hoped to erect a “wall of separation” that would free politics and the exercise of the intellect from religious control, with members of evangelical sects, who sought to protect religion from the corrupting embrace of government. Religious leaders continued to adhere to the traditional definition of Christian liberty—submitting to God’s will and leading a moral life—but increasingly felt this could be achieved without the support of government. Christ’s kingdom, as Isaac Backus, the Baptist leader, put it, was “not of this world.”

The movement toward religious freedom received a major impetus during the revolutionary era. Throughout the new nation, states disestablished their established churches—that is, deprived them of public funding and special legal privileges—although in some cases they appropriated money for the general support of Protestant denominations. The seven state constitutions that began with declarations of rights all declared a commitment to “the free exercise of religion.”

To be sure, every state but New York—whose constitution of 1777 established complete religious liberty—kept intact colonial provisions barring Jews from voting and holding public office. Seven states limited officeholding to Protestants. Massachusetts retained its Congregationalist establishment well into the nineteenth century. Its new constitution declared church attendance compulsory while guaranteeing freedom of individual worship. It would not end public financial support for religious institutions until 1833. Throughout the country, however, Catholics gained the right to worship without persecution. Maryland’s constitution of 1776 restored to the large Catholic population the civil and political rights that had been denied them for nearly a century.

A BILL for establishing RELIGIOUS FREEDOM,
printed for the consideration of the PEOPLE.

WELL aware that the opinions and belief of men depend not on their own will, but follow involuntarily the evidence proposed to their minds, that Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested his Supreme will that free it shall remain, by making it altogether insusceptible of restraint: That all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do, but to extend it by its influence on reason alone: That the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking, as the only true and infallible, and as such, endeavouring to impose them on others, hath established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world, and through all time: That to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical: That even the forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness, and is withdrawing from the Ministry those temporal rewards which, proceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct, are an additional incitement to earnest and unremitting labour for the instruction of mankind: That our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than on our opinions in physics or geometry: That therefore the persecuting any citizen as unworthy the public confidence, by laying upon him an incapacity of being called to offices of trust and emolument, unless he profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages to which, in common with his fellow citizens he has a natural right: That it tends also to corrupt the principles of that very religion it is meant to encourage, by bribing with a monopoly of worldly honours and emoluments, those who will externally profess and conform to it: That though indeed these are criminal who do not withstand such temptation, yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way: That the opinions of men are not the object of civil government, nor under its jurisdiction: That to suffer the civil Magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion, and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency, is a dangerous fallacy, which at once destroys all religious liberty; because he being of course Judge of that tendency will make his own opinions the rule of judgment, and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with, or differ from his own: That it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overtacts against peace and good order: And finally, that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself; that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human interposition, disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate; errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them.

WE the General Assembly of *Virginia* do enact, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious Worship place or Ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

AND though we well know that this Assembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding Assemblies, constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall hereafter passed to repeal the present, or to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right.

A draft of Thomas Jefferson's Virginia Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, published in 1779 in order to encourage public discussion of the issue. The bill was enacted in 1786.

JEFFERSON AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

In Virginia, Thomas Jefferson drew up a Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, which was introduced in the House of Burgesses in 1779 and adopted, after considerable controversy, in 1786. "I have sworn on the altar of God," he would later write, "eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." Jefferson viewed established churches as a major example of such despotism and, as his statement reveals, believed that religious liberty served God's will. Jefferson's bill, whose preamble declared that God "hath created the mind free," eliminated religious requirements for voting and officeholding and government financial support for churches, and barred the state from "forcing" individuals to adopt one or

another religious outlook. Late in life, Jefferson would list this measure, along with the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the University of Virginia, as the three accomplishments (leaving out his two terms as president) for which he wished to be remembered.

Religious liberty became the model for the revolutionary generation's definition of "rights" as private matters that must be protected from governmental interference. In an overwhelmingly Christian (though not necessarily churchgoing) nation, the separation of church and state drew a sharp line between public authority and a realm defined as "private," reinforcing the idea that rights exist as restraints on the power of government. It also offered a new justification for the idea of the United States as a beacon of liberty. In successfully opposing a Virginia tax for the general support of Christian churches, James Madison insisted that one reason for the complete separation of church and state was to reinforce the principle that the new nation offered "asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every nation and religion."

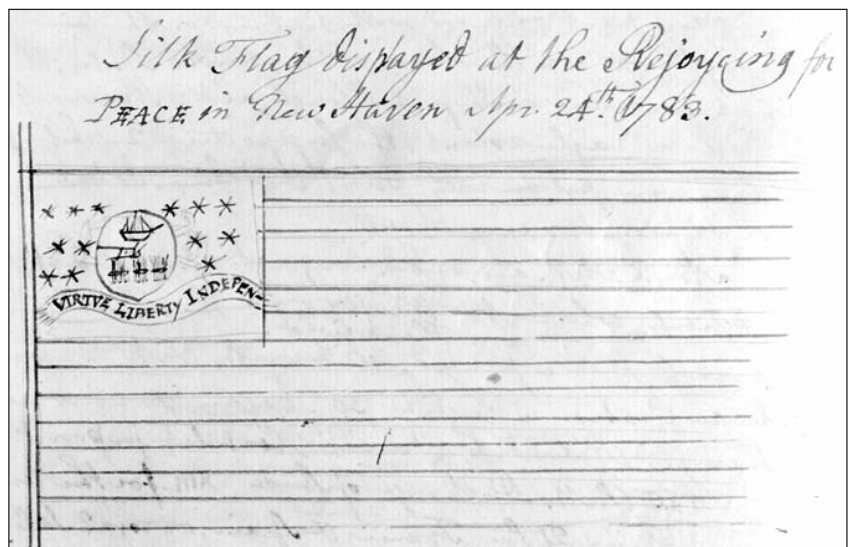
THE REVOLUTION AND THE CHURCHES

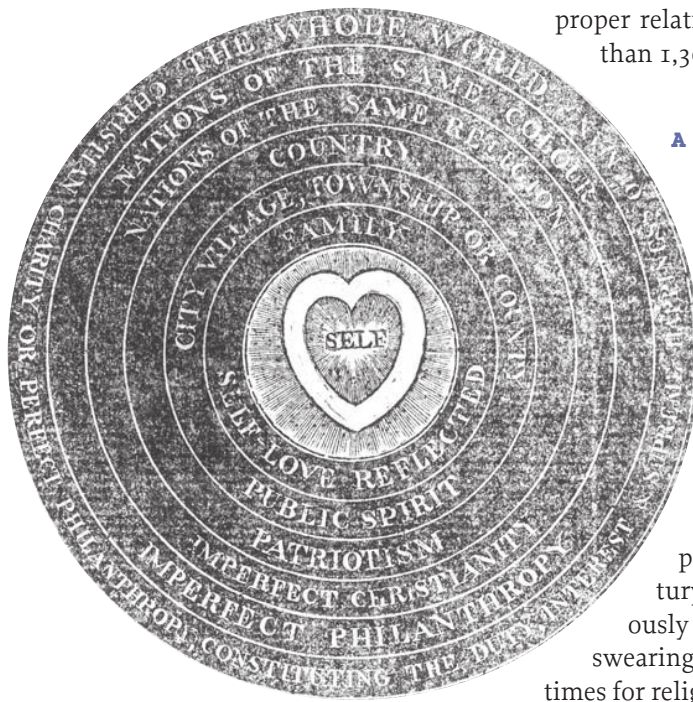
Thus, the Revolution enhanced the diversity of American Christianity and expanded the idea of religious liberty. But even as the separation of church and state created the social and political space that allowed all kinds of religious institutions to flourish, the culture of individual rights of which that separation was a part threatened to undermine church authority.

One example was the experience of the Moravian Brethren, who had emigrated from Germany to North Carolina on the eve of independence. To the dismay of the Moravian elders, younger members of the community, like so many other Americans of the revolutionary generation, insisted on asserting "their alleged freedom and human rights." Some became unruly and refused to obey the orders of town leaders. Many rejected the community's tradition of arranged marriages, insisting on choosing their own husbands and wives. To the elders, the idea of individual liberty—which they called, disparagingly, "the American freedom"—was little more than "an opportunity for temptation," a threat to the spirit of self-sacrifice and communal loyalty essential to Christian liberty.

But despite such fears, the Revolution did not end the influence of religion on American society—quite the reverse. American churches, in the words of one Presbyterian leader, learned to adapt to living at a time when "a spirit of liberty prevails." Thanks to religious freedom, the early republic witnessed an amazing proliferation of religious denominations. The most well-established churches—Anglican, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist—found themselves constantly challenged by upstarts like Free-Will Baptists and Universalists. Today, even as debate continues over the

Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale College, drew this sketch of a flag in his diary on April 24, 1783, shortly after Congress ratified the Treaty of Paris. Thirteen stars surround the coat of arms of Pennsylvania. The banner text illustrates the linkage among virtue, liberty, and American independence.





The Self, an engraving in *The Columbian Magazine*, 1789, illustrates various admirable qualities radiating outward from the virtuous citizen, including love for one's family, community, and nation.

proper relationship between spiritual and political authority, more than 1,300 religions are practiced in the United States.

A VIRTUOUS CITIZENRY

Despite the separation of church and state, colonial leaders were not hostile to religion. Most were devout Christians, and even Deists who attended no organized church believed religious values reinforced the moral qualities necessary for a republic to prosper. Public authority continued to support religious values, in laws barring non-Christians from office and in the continued prosecution of blasphemy and breaches of the Sabbath. Pennsylvania's new democratic constitution required citizens to acknowledge the existence of God, and it directed the legislature to enact "laws for the prevention of vice and immorality." In the nineteenth century, Pennsylvania's lawmakers took this mandate so seriously that the state became as famous for its laws against swearing and desecrating the Sabbath as it had been in colonial times for religious freedom.

Patriot leaders worried about the character of future citizens, especially how to encourage the quality of "virtue," the ability to sacrifice self-interest for the public good. Some, like Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Rush, put forward plans for the establishment of free, state-supported public schools. These would instruct future citizens in what Adams called "the principles of freedom," equipping them for participation in the now-expanded public sphere and for the wise election of representatives. A broad diffusion of knowledge was essential for a government based on the will of the people to survive and for America to avoid the fixed class structure of Europe. No nation, Jefferson wrote, could "expect to be ignorant and free."

DEFINING ECONOMIC FREEDOM

TOWARD FREE LABOR

In economic as well as political and religious affairs, the Revolution rewrote the definition of freedom. In colonial America, slavery was one part of a broad spectrum of kinds of unfree labor. In the generation after independence, with the rapid decline of indentured servitude and apprenticeship and the transformation of paid domestic service into an occupation for blacks and white females, the halfway houses between slavery and freedom disappeared, at least for white men. The decline of these forms of labor had many causes. Wage workers became more available as indentured servants completed their terms of required labor, and considerable numbers of servants and apprentices took advantage of the turmoil of the Revolution to escape from their masters.

The democratization of freedom contributed to these changes. The lack of freedom inherent in apprenticeship and servitude increasingly came

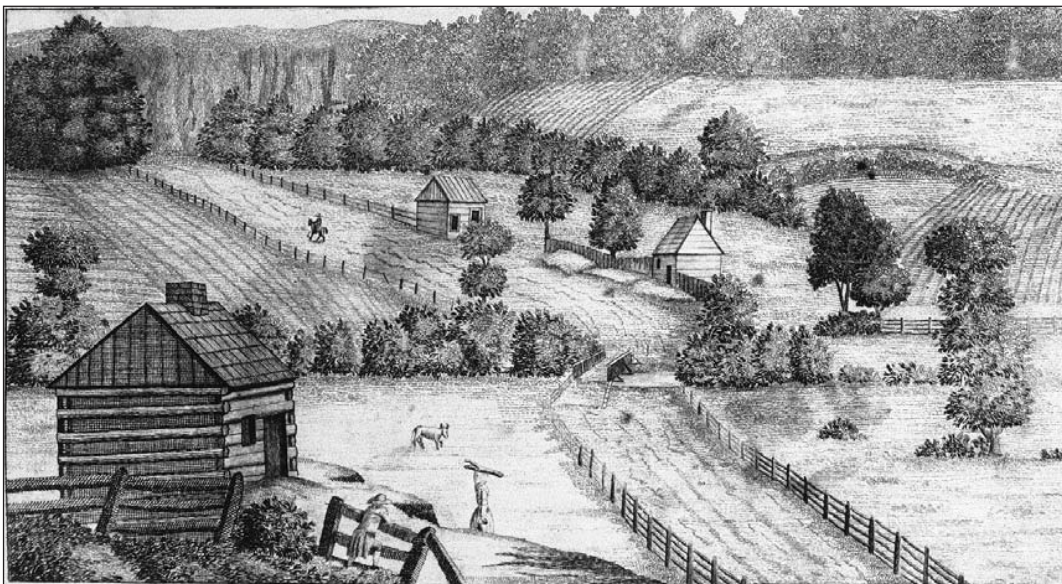
to be seen as incompatible with republican citizenship. Ebenezer Fox, a young apprentice on a Massachusetts farm, later recalled how he and other youths “made a direct application of the doctrines we heard daily, in relation to the oppression of the mother country, to our own circumstance. . . . I thought that I was doing myself a great injustice by remaining in bondage, when I ought to go free.” Fox became one of many apprentices during the Revolution who decided to run away—or, as he put it, to “liberate myself.” On the eve of the battles of Lexington and Concord in 1775, Fox and a friend set off for Rhode Island. After briefly working as a sailor, Fox, still a teenager, joined the Continental army.

In 1784, a group of “respectable” New Yorkers released a newly arrived shipload of indentured servants on the grounds that their status was “contrary to . . . the idea of liberty this country has so happily established.” By 1800, indentured servitude had all but disappeared from the United States. This development sharpened the distinction between freedom and slavery and between a northern economy relying on what would come to be called “free labor” (that is, working for wages or owning a farm or shop) and a southern economy ever more heavily dependent on the labor of slaves.

THE SOUL OF A REPUBLIC

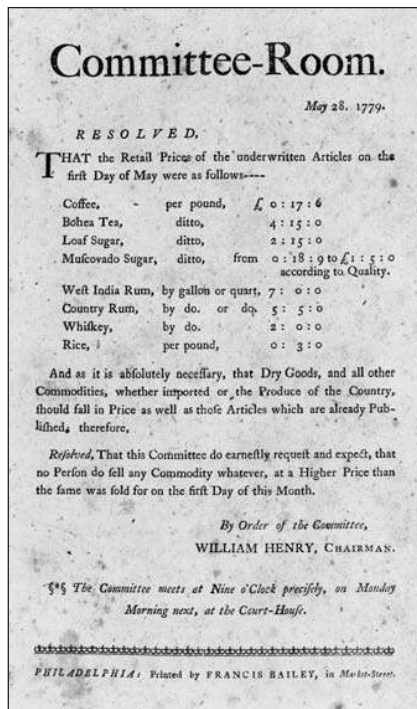
Americans of the revolutionary generation were preoccupied with the social conditions of freedom. Could a republic survive with a sizable dependent class of citizens? “A general and tolerably equal distribution of landed property,” proclaimed the educator and newspaper editor Noah Webster, “is the whole basis of national freedom.” “Equality,” he added, was “the very soul of a republic.” It outstripped in importance liberty of the press, trial by jury, and other “palladia of freedom.” Even a conservative like John Adams, who distrusted the era’s democratic upsurge, hoped that every member of society could acquire land, “so that the multitude may be

View from Bushongo Tavern, *an engraving from The Columbian Magazine, 1788, depicts the landscape of York County, Pennsylvania, exemplifying the kind of rural independence many Americans thought essential to freedom.*



possessed of small estates” and the new nation could avoid the emergence of fixed and unequal social classes. At the Revolution’s radical edge, some patriots believed that government had a responsibility to limit accumulations of property in the name of equality. To most free Americans, however, “equality” meant equal opportunity, rather than equality of condition. Many leaders of the Revolution nevertheless assumed that in the exceptional circumstances of the New World, with its vast areas of available land and large population of independent farmers and artisans, the natural workings of society would produce justice, liberty, and equality.

Like many other Americans of his generation, Thomas Jefferson believed that to lack economic resources was to lack freedom. Jefferson favored a limited state, but he also believed that government could help create freedom’s institutional framework. His proudest achievements included laws passed by Virginia abolishing entail (the limitation of inheritance to a specified line of heirs to keep an estate within a family) and primogeniture (the practice of passing a family’s land entirely to the eldest son). These measures, he believed, would help to prevent the rise of a “future aristocracy.” To the same end, Jefferson proposed to award fifty acres of land to “every person of full age” who did not already possess it, another way government could enhance the liberty of its subjects. Of course, the land Jefferson hoped would secure American liberty would have to come from Indians.



A broadside printed by the extralegal Philadelphia price-control committee, setting the retail prices of various goods such as coffee, sugar, and rum. Advocates of a free market strongly opposed the committee’s efforts.

THE POLITICS OF INFLATION

The Revolution thrust to the forefront of politics debates over whether local or national authorities should take steps to bolster household independence and protect Americans’ livelihoods by limiting price increases. Economic dislocations sharpened the controversy. To finance the war, Congress issued hundreds of millions of dollars in paper money. Coupled with wartime disruption of agriculture and trade and the hoarding of goods by some Americans hoping to profit from shortages, this produced an enormous increase in prices. The country, charged a letter to a Philadelphia newspaper in 1778, had been “reduced to the brink of ruin by the infamous practices of monopolizers.” “Hunger,” the writer warned, “will break through stone walls.”

Between 1776 and 1779, more than thirty incidents took place in which crowds confronted merchants accused of holding scarce goods off the market. Often, they seized stocks of food and sold them at the traditional “just price,” a form of protest common in eighteenth-century England. In one such incident, a crowd of 100 Massachusetts women accused an “eminent, wealthy, stingy merchant” of hoarding coffee, opened his warehouse, and carted off the goods. “A large concourse of men,” wrote Abigail Adams, “stood amazed, silent spectators of the whole transaction.”

THE DEBATE OVER FREE TRADE

In 1779, with inflation totally out of control (in one month, prices in Philadelphia jumped 45 percent), Congress urged states to adopt measures to fix wages and prices. The policy embodied the belief that the task of republican government was to promote the public good, not individuals’ self-interest. Bitter comments appeared in the Philadelphia press about the

city's elite expending huge sums on "public dinners and other extravaganzas" while many in the city were "destitute of the necessities of life." But when a Committee of Safety tried to enforce price controls, it met spirited opposition from merchants and other advocates of a free market.

In opposition to the traditional view that men should sacrifice for the public good, believers in freedom of trade argued that economic development arose from economic self-interest. Just as Newton had revealed the inner workings of the natural universe, so the social world also followed unchanging natural laws, among them that supply and demand regulated the prices of goods. Adam Smith's great treatise on economics, *The Wealth of Nations*, published in England in 1776, was beginning to become known in the United States. Smith's argument that the "invisible hand" of the free market directed economic life more effectively and fairly than governmental intervention offered intellectual justification for those who believed that the economy should be left to regulate itself.

Advocates of independence had envisioned America, released from the British Navigation Acts, trading freely with all the world. Opponents of price controls advocated free trade at home as well. "Let trade be as free as air," wrote one merchant. "Natural liberty" would regulate prices. Here were two competing conceptions of economic freedom—one based on the traditional view that the interests of the community took precedence over the property rights of individuals, the other that unregulated economic freedom would produce social harmony and public gain. After 1779, the latter view gained ascendancy. In 1780, Robert Morris, a Philadelphia merchant and banker, became director of congressional fiscal policy. State and federal efforts to regulate prices ceased. But the clash between these two visions of economic freedom would continue long after independence had been achieved.

"Yield to the mighty current of American freedom." So a member of the South Carolina legislature implored his colleagues in 1777. The current of freedom swept away not only British authority but also the principle of hereditary rule, the privileges of established churches, long-standing habits of deference and hierarchy, and old limits on the political nation. Yet in other areas, the tide of freedom encountered obstacles that did not yield as easily to its powerful flow.

THE LIMITS OF LIBERTY

COLONIAL LOYALISTS

Not all Americans shared in the democratization of freedom brought on by the American Revolution. Loyalists—those who retained their allegiance to the crown—experienced the conflict and its aftermath as a loss of liberty. Many leading Loyalists had supported American resistance in the 1760s but drew back at the prospect of independence and war. Loyalists included some of the most prominent Americans and some of the most humble. Altogether, an estimated 20 to 25 percent of free Americans remained loyal to the British, and nearly 20,000 fought on their side. At some points in the war, Loyalists serving with the British outnumbered Washington's army.

There were Loyalists in every colony, but they were most numerous in New York, Pennsylvania, and the backcountry of the Carolinas and Georgia.

Some were wealthy men whose livelihoods depended on close working relationships with Britain—lawyers, merchants, Anglican ministers, and imperial officials. Many feared anarchy in the event of an American victory. “Liberty,” one wrote, “can have no existence without obedience to the laws.”

The struggle for independence heightened existing tensions between ethnic groups and social classes within the colonies. Some Loyalist ethnic minorities, like Highland Scots in North Carolina, feared that local majorities would infringe on their freedom to enjoy cultural autonomy. In the South, many backcountry farmers who had long resented the domination of public affairs by wealthy planters sided with the British. So did tenants on the New York estates of patriot landlords like the Livingston family. Robert Livingston had signed the Declaration of Independence. When the army of General Burgoyne approached Livingston’s manor in 1777, tenants rose in revolt, hoping the British would confiscate his land and distribute it among themselves. Their hopes were dashed by Burgoyne’s defeat at Saratoga. In the South, numerous slaves sided with the British, hoping an American defeat would bring them freedom.

THE LOYALISTS’ PLIGHT

The War of Independence was in some respects a civil war among Americans. “This country,” wrote a German colonel fighting with the British, “is the scene of the most cruel events. Neighbors are on opposite sides, children are against their fathers.” Freedom of expression is often a casualty of war, and many Americans were deprived of basic rights in the name of liberty. After Dr. Abner Beebe, of East Haddam, Connecticut, spoke “very freely” in favor of the British, a mob attacked his house and destroyed his gristmill. Beebe himself was “assaulted, stripped naked, and hot pitch [tar] was poured upon him.” The new state governments, or in other instances crowds of patriots, suppressed newspapers thought to be loyal to Britain.

Pennsylvania arrested and seized the property of Quakers, Mennonites, and Moravians—pacifist denominations who refused to bear arms because of their religious beliefs. With the approval of Congress, many states required residents to take oaths of allegiance to the new nation. Those who refused were denied the right to vote and in many cases forced into exile. “The flames of discord,” wrote one British observer, “are sprouting from the seeds of liberty.” Some wealthy Loyalists saw their land confiscated and sold at auction. Twenty-eight estates belonging to New Hampshire governor John Wentworth and his family were seized, as were the holdings of great New York Loyalist landlords like the De Lancey and Philipse families. Most of the buyers of this land were merchants, lawyers, and established landowners. Unable to afford the purchase price, tenants had no choice but to continue to labor for the new owners.

A 1780 British cartoon commenting on the “cruel fate” of American Loyalists. Pro-independence colonists are likened to savage Indians.





The Revolutionary War was, in some ways, a civil war within the colonies. There were Loyalists in every colony; they were most numerous in New York and North and South Carolina.

When the war ended, as many as 100,000 Loyalists (including 20,000 slaves) were banished from the United States or emigrated voluntarily—mostly to Britain, Canada, or the West Indies—rather than live in an independent United States. But for those who remained, hostility proved to be short-lived. In the Treaty of Paris of 1783, as noted in Chapter 5, Americans pledged to end the persecution of Loyalists by state and local governments and to restore property seized during the war. American leaders believed the new nation needed to establish an international reputation for fairness and civility. States soon repealed their test oaths for voting and officeholding. Loyalists who did not leave the country were quickly reintegrated into American society, although despite the promise of the Treaty of Paris, confiscated Loyalist property was not returned.

THE INDIANS' REVOLUTION

Another group for whom American independence spelled a loss of freedom—the Indians—was less fortunate. Despite the Proclamation of 1763, discussed in Chapter 4, colonists had continued to move westward during the 1760s and early 1770s, leading Indian tribes to complain of intrusions on their land. Lord Dunmore, Virginia's royal governor, observed in 1772 that he had found it impossible "to restrain the Americans. . . . They do not conceive that government has any right to forbid their taking possession of a vast tract of country" or to force them to honor treaties with Indians.

Kentucky, the principal hunting ground of southern Cherokees and numerous Ohio Valley Indians, became a flash point of conflict among settlers, land speculators, and Native Americans, with the faraway British government seeking in vain to impose order. Many patriot leaders, including George Washington, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson, were deeply involved in western land speculation. Washington himself had acquired over 60,000 acres of land in western Pennsylvania after the Seven Years' War by purchasing land vouchers (a form of soldiers' wages) from his men at discount rates. Indeed, British efforts to restrain land speculation west of the line specified by the Proclamation of 1763 had been one of the many grievances of Virginia's revolutionary generation.

About 200,000 Native Americans lived east of the Mississippi River in 1790. Like white Americans, Indians divided in allegiance during the War of Independence. Some, like the Stockbridge tribe in Massachusetts, suffered heavy losses fighting the British. Many tribes tried to maintain neutrality, only to see themselves break into pro-American and pro-British factions. Most of the Iroquois nations sided with the British, but the Oneida joined the Americans. Despite strenuous efforts to avoid conflict, members of the Iroquois Confederacy for the first time faced each other in battle. (After the war, the Oneida submitted to Congress claims for losses suffered during the war, including sheep, hogs, kettles, frying pans, plows, and pewter plates—evidence of how fully they had been integrated into the market economy.) In the South, younger Cherokee leaders joined the British while older chiefs tended to favor the Americans. Other southern tribes like the Choctaw and Creek remained loyal to the crown.

Among the grievances listed by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence was Britain's enlisting "savages" to fight on its side. But in the



war that raged throughout the western frontier, savagery was not confined to either combatant. In the Ohio country, the British encouraged Indian allies to burn frontier farms and settlements. For their part, otherwise humane patriot leaders ignored the traditional rules of warfare when it came to Indians. William Henry Drayton, a leader of the patriot cause in South Carolina and the state's chief justice in 1776, advised officers marching against the Cherokees to "cut up every Indian cornfield, burn every Indian town," and enslave all Indian captives. Three years later, Washington dispatched an expedition, led by General John Sullivan, against hostile Iroquois, with the aim of "the total destruction and devastation of their settlements and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible." After his campaign ended, Sullivan reported that he had burned forty Indian towns, destroyed thousands of bushels of corn, and uprooted a vast number of fruit trees and vegetable gardens. Many Iroquois communities faced starvation. In the Ohio Valley, as we will see in Chapter 7, fighting did not end until the 1790s.

WHITE FREEDOM, INDIAN FREEDOM

Independence created governments democratically accountable to voters who coveted Indian land. Indeed, to many patriots, access to Indian land was one of the fruits of American victory. Driving the Indians from the Ohio Valley, wrote Jefferson, would "add to the Empire of Liberty an extensive and fertile country." But liberty for whites meant loss of liberty for Indians. "The whites were no sooner free themselves," a Pequot, William Apess, would later write, than they turned on "the poor Indians." Independence offered the opportunity to complete the process of dispossessing Indians of their rich lands in upstate New York, the Ohio Valley, and the southern backcountry. The only hope for the Indians, Jefferson wrote, lay in their "removal

A cartoon depicting a British officer buying the scalps of patriots from Indians. Jefferson listed British incitement of Indians against the colonists as one of Americans' grievances in the Declaration of Independence.

beyond the Mississippi.” Even as the war raged, Americans forced defeated tribes like the Cherokee to cede most of their land.

American independence, a group of visiting Indians told the Spanish governor at St. Louis, was “the greatest blow that could have been dealt us.” The Treaty of Paris marked the culmination of a century in which the balance of power in eastern North America shifted away from the Indians and toward white Americans. The displacement of British power to Canada, coming twenty years after the departure of the French, left Indians with seriously diminished white support. Some Indian leaders, like Joseph Brant, a young Mohawk in upstate New York, hoped to create an Indian confederacy lying between Canada and the new United States. He sided with the British to try to achieve this goal. But in the Treaty of Paris, the British abandoned their Indian allies, agreeing to recognize American sovereignty over the entire region east of the Mississippi River, completely ignoring the Indian presence.

To Indians, freedom meant defending their own independence and retaining possession of their land. Like other Americans, they appropriated the language of the Revolution and interpreted it according to their own experiences and for their own purposes. The Iroquois, declared one spokesman, were “a free people subject to no power on earth.” Creeks and Choctaws denied having done anything to forfeit their “independence and natural rights.” When Massachusetts established a system of state “guardianship” over previously self-governing tribes, a group of Mashpees petitioned the legislature, claiming for themselves “the rights of man” and complaining of this “infringement of freedom.”

“Freedom” had not played a major part in Indians’ vocabulary before the Revolution. By the early nineteenth century, dictionaries of Indian languages for the first time began to include the word. In a sense, Indians’ definition of their rights was becoming Americanized. But there seemed to be no permanent place for the descendants of the continent’s native population in a new nation bent on creating an empire in the West.

SLAVERY AND THE REVOLUTION

While Indians experienced American independence as a real threat to their own liberty, African-Americans saw in the ideals of the Revolution and the reality of war an opportunity to claim freedom. When the United States declared its independence in 1776, the slave population had grown to 500,000, about one-fifth of the new nation’s inhabitants. Slaveowning and slave trading were accepted routines of colonial life. Advertisements announcing the sale of slaves and seeking the return of runaways filled colonial newspapers. Sometimes, the same issues of patriotic newspapers that published accounts of the activities of the Sons of Liberty or arguments against the Stamp Act also contained slave sale notices.

THE LANGUAGE OF SLAVERY AND FREEDOM

Slavery played a central part in the language of revolution. Apart from “liberty,” it was the word most frequently invoked in the era’s legal and

political literature. Eighteenth-century writers frequently juxtaposed freedom and slavery as “the two extremes of happiness and misery in society.” Yet in the era’s debates over British rule, slavery was primarily a political category, shorthand for the denial of one’s personal and political rights by arbitrary government. Those who lacked a voice in public affairs, declared a 1769 petition demanding an expansion of the right to vote in Britain, were “enslaved.” By the eve of independence, the contrast between Britain, “a kingdom of slaves,” and America, a “country of free men,” had become a standard part of the language of resistance. Such language was employed without irony even in areas where nearly half the population in fact consisted of slaves. South Carolina, one writer declared in 1774, was a “sacred land” of freedom, where it was impossible to believe that “slavery shall soon be permitted to erect her throne.”

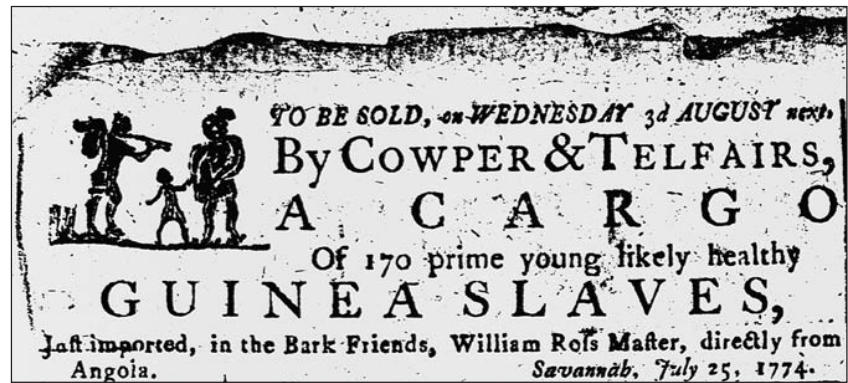
Colonial writers of the 1760s occasionally made a direct connection between slavery as a reality and slavery as a metaphor. Few were as forthright as James Otis of Massachusetts, whose pamphlets did much to popularize the idea that Parliament lacked the authority to tax the colonies and regulate their commerce. Freedom, Otis insisted, must be universal: “What man is or ever was born free if every man is not?” Otis wrote of blacks not as examples of the loss of rights awaiting free Americans, but as flesh and blood British subjects “entitled to all the civil rights of such.”

Otis was hardly typical of patriot leaders. But the presence of hundreds of thousands of slaves powerfully affected the meaning of freedom for the leaders of the American Revolution. In a famous speech to Parliament warning against attempts to intimidate the colonies, the British statesman Edmund Burke suggested that familiarity with slavery made colonial leaders unusually sensitive to threats to their own liberties. Where freedom was a privilege, not a common right, he observed, “those who are free are by far the most proud and jealous of their freedom.” On the other hand, many British observers could not resist pointing out the colonists’ apparent hypocrisy. “How is it,” asked Dr. Samuel Johnson, “that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of negroes?”

OBSTACLES TO ABOLITION

The contradiction between freedom and slavery seems so self-evident that it is difficult today to appreciate the power of the obstacles to abolition. At the time of the Revolution, slavery was already an old institution in America. It existed in every colony and formed the basis of the economy and social structure from Maryland southward. At least 40 percent of Virginia’s population and even higher proportions in Georgia and South Carolina were slaves.

Virtually every founding father owned slaves at one point in his life, including not only southern planters but northern merchants, lawyers, and farmers. (John Adams and Tom Paine were notable exceptions.)



Advertisement for newly arrived slaves, in a Savannah newspaper, 1774. Even as colonists defended their own liberty against the British, the buying and selling of slaves continued.

Thomas Jefferson owned more than 100 slaves when he wrote of mankind's unalienable right to liberty, and everything he cherished in his own manner of life, from lavish entertainments to the leisure that made possible the pursuit of arts and sciences, ultimately rested on slave labor.

Some patriots, in fact, argued that slavery for blacks made freedom possible for whites. Eliminating the great bulk of the dependent poor from the political nation left the public arena to men of propertied independence. Owning slaves offered a route to the economic autonomy widely deemed necessary for genuine freedom, a point driven home by a 1780 Virginia law that rewarded veterans of the War of Independence with 300 acres of land—and a slave. South Carolina and Georgia promised every white military volunteer a slave at the war's end.

So, too, the Lockean vision of the political community as a group of individuals contracting together to secure their natural rights could readily be invoked to defend bondage. Nothing was more essential to freedom, in this view, than the right of self-government and the protection of property against outside interference. These principles suggested that for the government to seize property—including slave property—against the owner's will would be an infringement on liberty. If government by the consent of the governed formed the essence of political freedom, then to require owners to give up their slave property would reduce *them* to slavery.

THE CAUSE OF GENERAL LIBERTY

Nonetheless, by imparting so absolute a value to liberty and defining freedom as a universal entitlement rather than a set of rights specific to a particular place or people, the Revolution inevitably raised questions about the status of slavery in the new nation. Before independence, there had been little public discussion of the institution, even though enlightened opinion in the Atlantic world had come to view slavery as morally wrong and economically inefficient, a relic of a barbarous past.

As early as 1688, a group of German Quakers issued a “protest” regarding the rights of blacks, declaring it as unjust “to have them slaves, as it is to have other white ones.” Samuel Sewall, a Boston merchant, published *The Selling of Joseph* in 1700, the first antislavery tract printed in America. All “the sons of Adam,” Sewall insisted, were entitled to “have equal right unto liberty.” Slavery, as noted in Chapter 4, had initially been banned in Georgia (although it later came to sustain the rice-based plantation economy in that colony). During the course of the

eighteenth century, antislavery sentiments had spread among Pennsylvania's Quakers, whose belief that all persons possessed the divine “inner light” made them particularly receptive.

But it was during the revolutionary era that slavery for the first time became a focus of public debate. The Pennsylvania patriot Benjamin Rush in 1773 called upon “advocates for American liberty” to “espouse the cause of . . . general liberty” and warned that slavery was one of those

A 1775 notice in *The Massachusetts Spy* reporting a resolution of the Committees of Correspondence of Worcester County that advocated the abolition of slavery.

WHEREAS the NEGROES in the counties of Bristol and Worcester, the 24th of March last, petitioned the Committees of Correspondence for the county of Worcester (then convened in Worcester) to assist them in obtaining their freedom.

THEREFORE,
In County Convention, June 14th, 1775.

RESOLVED, That we abhor the enslaving of any of the human race, and particularly of the NEGROES in this country. And that whenever there shall be a door opened, or opportunity present, for any thing to be done toward the emancipating the NEGROES; we will use our influence and endeavour that such a thing may be effected,

Attest. WILLIAM HENSHAW, Clerk.

“national crimes” that one day would bring “national punishment.” Jefferson, as mentioned in the previous chapter, unsuccessfully tried to include criticism of slavery in the Declaration of Independence. Although a slaveholder himself, in private he condemned slavery as a system that every day imposed on its victims “more misery, than ages of that which [the colonists] rose in rebellion to oppose.”

PETITIONS FOR FREEDOM

The Revolution inspired widespread hopes that slavery could be removed from American life. Most dramatically, slaves themselves appreciated that by defining freedom as a universal right, the leaders of the Revolution had devised a weapon that could be used against their own bondage. The language of liberty echoed in slave communities, North and South. Living amid freedom but denied its benefits, slaves appropriated the patriotic ideology for their own purposes. The most insistent advocates of freedom as a universal entitlement were African-Americans, who demanded that the leaders of the struggle for independence live up to their self-proclaimed creed. As early as 1766, white Charlestonians had been shocked when their opposition to the Stamp Act inspired a group of blacks to parade about the city crying “Liberty.” Nine years later, the Provincial Congress of South Carolina felt compelled to investigate the “high notions of liberty” the struggle against Britain had inspired among the slaves.

The first concrete steps toward emancipation in revolutionary America were “freedom petitions”—arguments for liberty presented to New England’s courts and legislatures in the early 1770s by enslaved African-Americans. How, one such petition asked, could America “seek release from English tyranny and not seek the same for disadvantaged Africans in her midst?” Some slaves sued in court for being “illegally detained in slavery.” The turmoil of war offered other avenues to freedom. Many slaves ran away from their masters and tried to pass as freeborn. The number of fugitive slave advertisements in colonial newspapers rose dramatically in the 1770s and 1780s. As one owner put it in accounting for his slave Jim’s escape, “I believe he has nothing in view but freedom.”

In 1776, the year of American independence, Lemuel Haynes, a black member of the Massachusetts militia and later a celebrated minister, urged that Americans “extend” their conception of freedom. If liberty were truly “an innate principle” for all mankind, Haynes insisted, “even an African [had] as equally good a right to his liberty in common with Englishmen.” Throughout the revolutionary period, petitions, pamphlets, and sermons by blacks expressed “astonishment” that white patriots failed to realize that “every principle from which America has acted” demanded emancipation. Blacks sought to make white Americans understand slavery as a concrete reality—the denial of all the essential elements of freedom—not merely as a metaphor for the loss of political self-determination. Petitioning for their freedom in 1773, a group of New England slaves exclaimed, “We have no property! We have no wives! No children! We have no city! No country!”

Most slaves of the revolutionary era were only one or two generations removed from Africa. They did not need the ideology of the Revolution to persuade them that freedom was a birthright—the experience of their par-



A portrait of the poet Phillis Wheatley (1753–1784).

ents and grandparents suggested as much. “My love of freedom,” wrote the black poet Phillis Wheatley in 1783, arose from the “cruel fate” of being “snatch’d from Afric’s” shore. Brought as a slave to Boston in 1761, Wheatley learned to read and published her first poem in a New England newspaper in 1765, when she was around twelve years old. The fact that a volume of her poems had to be printed with a testimonial from prominent citizens, including patriot leader John Hancock, affirming that she was in fact the author, illustrates that many whites found it difficult to accept the idea of blacks’ intellectual ability. Yet by invoking the Revolution’s ideology of liberty to demand their own rights and by defining freedom as a universal entitlement, blacks demonstrated how American they had become, even as they sought to redefine what American freedom in fact represented.

BRITISH EMANCIPATORS

As noted in the previous chapter, some 5,000 slaves fought for American independence and many thereby gained their freedom. Yet far more slaves obtained liberty from the British. Lord Dunmore’s proclamation of 1775, and the Phillipsburgh Proclamation of General Henry Clinton issued four years later, offered sanctuary to slaves who escaped to British lines. Numerous signers of the Declaration of Independence lost slaves as a result. Thirty of Thomas Jefferson’s slaves ran away to the British, as did slaves owned by Patrick Henry and James Madison. All told, nearly 100,000 slaves, including one-quarter of all the slaves in South Carolina and one-third of those in Georgia, deserted their owners and fled to British lines. This was by far the largest exodus from the plantations until the outbreak of the Civil War.

Some of these escaped slaves were recaptured as the tide of battle turned in the patriots’ favor. But at the war’s end, some 20,000 were living in three enclaves of British control—New York, Charleston, and Savannah. George Washington insisted they must be returned. Sir Guy Carleton, the British commander in New York, replied that to do so would be “a dishonorable violation of the public faith,” since they had been promised their freedom. In the end, more than 15,000 black men, women, and children accompanied the British out of the country. They ended up in Nova Scotia, England, and Sierra Leone, a settlement for former slaves from the United States established by the British on the coast of West Africa. Some were re-enslaved in the West Indies. A number of their stories were indeed remarkable. Harry Washington, an African-born slave of George Washington, had run away from Mount Vernon in 1771 but was recaptured. In 1775, he fled to join Lord Dunmore and eventually became a corporal in a black British regiment, the Black Pioneers. He eventually ended up in Sierra Leone, where in 1800 he took part in an unsuccessful uprising by black settlers against the British-appointed government.

The issue of compensation for the slaves who departed with the British poisoned relations between Britain and the new United States for decades to come. Finally, in 1827, Britain agreed to make payments to 1,100 Americans who claimed they had been improperly deprived of their slave property.

Officers Names and their commands	Where Bound	Negro's Name	Age	Description	Claims		Name of the Person whose Property they are		
					Name	Place of Residence			
Capt. Adventure Capt. Robt. Adams	St Johns	Kentz Dyer	25	Antt Skullets Black			Cornet Depueville A.D.		
		Bella Jenkins	21	White			Cornet Truman		
Comd. Duches of Rajin... Capt. Johnson etc.	St Johns	Bill Syng	16	Antt Black			Col. Syng		
		John Syng	14	White			9		
		David Syng	21	Low Wench			9		
		Salut Syng	5	Skullets			9		
		James Carter	21	Skulter			9		
		Yves Douglas	21	Skullets			9		
		John Carter	9	2 ^d boy			9		
		Simon Carter	24	Antt Black			9		
		Thomas Lanson	28	White			Gen. Leonard Pige		
		Saml Brown	12	White			9		
		Thomas Colter	23	White			9		
		James Croas	15	Squint Black			9		
		James Miles	21	White			9		
		Saml Hunt	30	Tall Antt Fellow			9		
		Joseph Collet	23	Antt			James Fuller		
		Henry Collet	21	Health seemingly sound			9		
		Colly John Greene	Port Roseway	Simon Garrison	16	Antt Man			W ^m Johnson
				Jack Smith	31	Tall Antt Man			John M. Neal
				W ^m Williams	23	Waddl leg'd Antt Man			W ^m Johnson
Jacob Lanson	34			Antt Man			Ed ^d Smith		
Smith his wife							9		
John Brown	25			Antt Man			W ^m Johnson		
Henry Gray	51			White			John Reke		
Abby his wife	24			Antt Wench 5 scars in y face			9		
Saml Dickson	21			Antt tall Man			Robert French		
His Sister	22			2 ^d Scar on her forehead			James Smith		
Jack Gordon	14			2 ^d White top blawish left eye			John Miller		
Henry	33			Antt W ^m 3 scars on each cheek			James Bruce		
Thomas Foster	34			Antt Wench			James Smith		
George Lacey	12	Antt W ^m marks on each leg			John Smith				
Henry his wife	23	Antt Melancholic			9				
Hale her daughter	16	White							
Warner	21	Antt father has 2 Boys James born			John Miller				
Henry Lynch	22	Antt Middle leg'd			Ed ^d Lynch				
Deborah his wife	20	2 ^d Scar on her cheek			9				
Saml Gray	15	Antt tall Man			Math ^s Southard				
Andrew Higdon	Port Roseway	George May	32	Antt Fellow			James Dewell		
Hugh Walls etc.		W ^m Mannin	27	Thin waling Fellow			Rich ^d White		
Henry McGeige		23	Antt Fellow			W ^m Palmer			
		Ed ^d Randall	23	White			W ^m Laford		

The Book of Negroes, compiled by British commanders when they evacuated New York City in 1783, lists some 3,000 African-Americans who had sought their freedom behind British lines and departed with the British army. Many ended up in Nova Scotia; some eventually made their way to Sierra Leone in West Africa. This page includes an entry for Deborah, formerly a slave of George Washington (sixth from bottom).

VOLUNTARY EMANCIPATIONS

For a brief moment, the revolutionary upheaval appeared to threaten the continued existence of slavery. During the War of Independence, nearly every state prohibited or discouraged the further importation of slaves



VOICES OF FREEDOM

FROM ABIGAIL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS, Braintree, Mass. (March 31, 1776)

From their home in Massachusetts, Abigail Adams maintained a lively correspondence with her husband while he was in Philadelphia serving in the Continental Congress. In this letter, she suggests some of the limits of the patriots' commitment to liberty.

I wish you would write me a letter half as long as I write you, and tell me if you may where your fleet have gone? What sort of defense Virginia can make against our common enemy? Whether it is so situated as to make an able defense? . . . I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for Liberty cannot be equally strong in the breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow creatures of theirs. Of this I am certain, that it is not founded upon that generous and Christian principle of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us. . . .

I long to hear that you have declared an independency, and by the way in the new Code of Laws

which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any such laws in which we have no voice, or representation.

That your sex are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity? Men of sense in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your sex. Regard us then as beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

FROM Petitions of Slaves to the Massachusetts Legislature (1773 and 1777)

Many slaves saw the struggle for independence as an opportunity to assert their own claims to freedom. Among the first efforts toward abolition were petitions by Massachusetts slaves to their legislature.

The efforts made by the legislative of this province in their last sessions to free themselves from slavery, gave us, who are in that deplorable state, a high degree of satisfaction. We expect great things from men who have made such a noble stand against the designs of their *fellow-men* to enslave them. We cannot but wish and hope Sir, that you will have the same grand object, we mean civil and religious liberty, in view in your next session. The divine spirit of *freedom*, seems to fire every breast on this continent. . . .

* * *

Your petitioners apprehend that they have in common with all other men a natural and unalienable right to that freedom which the great parent of the universe hath bestowed equally on all mankind and which they have never forfeited by any compact or agreement whatever but [they] were unjustly dragged by the hand of cruel power from their dearest friends and . . . from a populous, pleasant, and plentiful country and in violation of laws of

nature and of nations and in defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity brought here . . . to be sold like beast[s] of burden . . . among a people professing the mild religion of Jesus. . . .

In imitation of the laudable example of the good people of these states your petitioners have long and patiently waited the event of petition after petition by them presented to the legislative body. . . . They cannot but express their astonishment that it has never been considered that every principle from which America has acted in the course of their unhappy difficulties with Great Britain pleads stronger than a thousand arguments in favor of your petitioners [and their desire] to be restored to the enjoyment of that which is the natural right of all men.

QUESTIONS

1. What does Abigail Adams have in mind when she refers to the “unlimited power” husbands exercise over their wives?
2. How do the slaves employ the principles of the Revolution for their own aims?
3. What do these documents suggest about the boundaries of freedom in the era of the American Revolution?

from Africa. The war left much of the plantation South in ruins. During the 1780s, a considerable number of slaveholders, especially in Virginia and Maryland, voluntarily emancipated their slaves. In 1796, Robert Carter III, a member of one of Virginia's wealthiest families, provided for the gradual emancipation of the more than 400 slaves he owned. In the same year, Richard Randolph, a member of another prominent Virginia family, drafted a will that condemned slavery as an "infamous practice," provided for the freedom of about 90 slaves, and set aside part of his land for them to own.

Farther south, however, the abolition process never got under way. When the British invaded South Carolina during the war, John Laurens, whose father Henry was Charleston's leading merchant and revolutionary-era statesman, proposed to "lead a corps of emancipated blacks in the defense of liberty." South Carolina's leaders rejected the idea. They would rather lose the war than lose their slaves. (However, black soldiers from the colony of Saint Domingue, some free and some slave, fought on the American side as part of a French contingent in the unsuccessful defense of Savannah, Georgia, in 1778.)

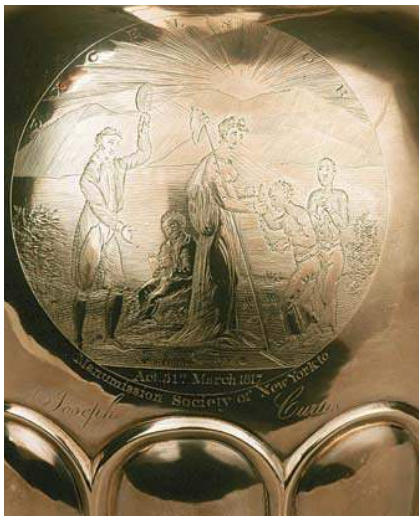
ABOLITION IN THE NORTH

Between 1777 (when Vermont drew up a constitution that banned slavery) and 1804 (when New Jersey acted), every state north of Maryland took steps toward emancipation, the first time in recorded history that legislative power had been invoked to eradicate slavery. But even here, where slavery was peripheral to the economy, the method of abolition reflected how property rights impeded emancipation. Generally, abolition laws did not free living slaves. Instead, they provided for the liberty of any child born in the future to a slave mother, but only after he or she had served the mother's master until adulthood as compensation for the owner's future economic loss. Children born to slave mothers in Pennsylvania after passage of the state's emancipation act of 1780 had to serve the owner for twenty-eight years, far longer than had been customary for white indentured servants. These laws gave indentured servitude, rapidly declining among whites, a new lease on life in the case of northern blacks.

Abolition in the North was a slow, drawn-out process. For slaves alive when the northern laws were passed, hopes for freedom rested on their own ability to escape and the voluntary actions of their owners. And many northern slaveholders proved reluctant indeed when it came to liberating their slaves. New York City, where one-fifth of the white families owned at least one slave in 1790, recorded only seventy-six such voluntary acts between 1783 and 1800. The first national census, in 1790, recorded 21,000 slaves still living in New York and 11,000 in New Jersey. New Yorker John Jay, chief justice of the United States, owned five slaves in 1800. As late as 1830, the census revealed that there were still 3,500 slaves in the North. The last slaves in Connecticut did not become free until 1848. In 1860, eighteen elderly slaves still resided in New Jersey.

FREE BLACK COMMUNITIES

All in all, the Revolution had a contradictory impact on American slavery and, therefore, on American freedom. Gradual as it was, the abolition of slav-



An engraving from a commemorative pitcher presented to the abolitionist Joseph Curtis by the New York Manumission Society in 1819 depicts Liberty releasing slaves from bondage. Curtis holds aloft a mirror reflecting the rising sun. Founded in 1785 by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and others, the Society was instrumental in the passage of New York's 1799 law providing for the gradual abolition of slavery.



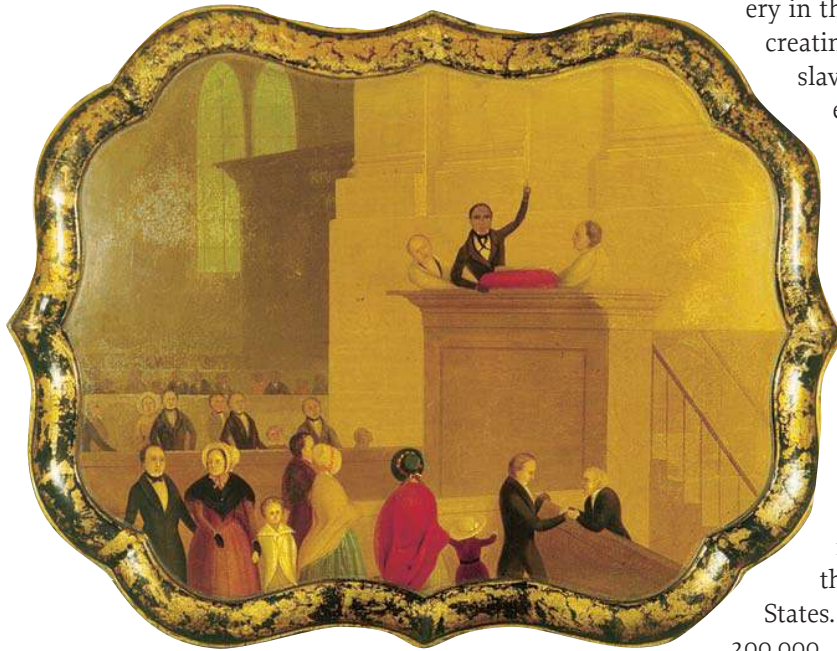
VISIONS OF FREEDOM



Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences. This 1792 painting by Samuel Jennings is one of the few visual images of the early republic explicitly to link slavery with tyranny and liberty with abolition. The female figure offers books to newly freed slaves. Other forms of knowledge depicted include a globe, an artist's palette, and the top of a column, evoking the republic of ancient Rome. Beneath her left foot lies a broken chain. In the background, free slaves enjoy some leisure time. Painted at the same time as the Haitian Revolution was spreading fear of a slave rebellion, the work celebrates emancipation rather than seeing it as threatening.

QUESTIONS

1. What attributes of freedom does the artist emphasize most strongly in the painting?
2. How do the figures in the painting convey ideas about race?



A tray painted by an unknown artist in the early nineteenth century portrays Lemuel Haynes, a celebrated black preacher and critic of slavery.

ery in the North drew a line across the new nation, creating the dangerous division between free and slave states. Abolition in the North, voluntary emancipation in the Upper South, and the escape of thousands from bondage created, for the first time in American history, a sizable free black population (many of whose members took new family names like Freeman or Freeland).

On the eve of independence, virtually every black person in America had been a slave. Now, free communities, with their own churches, schools, and leaders, came into existence. They formed a standing challenge to the logic of slavery, a haven for fugitives, and a springboard for further efforts at abolition. In 1776, fewer than 10,000 free blacks resided in the United States. By 1810, their numbers had grown to nearly 200,000, most of them living in Maryland and

Virginia. In all the states except Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia, free black men who met taxpaying or property qualifications enjoyed the right to vote under new state constitutions. As the widespread use of the term “citizens of color” suggests, the first generation of free blacks, at least in the North, formed part of the political nation.

For many Americans, white as well as black, the existence of slavery would henceforth be recognized as a standing affront to the ideal of American freedom, a “disgrace to a free government,” as a group of New Yorkers put it. In 1792, when Samuel Jennings of Philadelphia painted *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences*, he included among the symbols of freedom a slave’s broken chain, graphically illustrating how freedom had become identified not simply with political independence, but with emancipation. Nonetheless, the stark fact is that slavery survived the War of Independence and, thanks to the natural increase of the slave population, continued to grow. The national census of 1790 revealed that despite all those who had become free through state laws, voluntary emancipation, and escape, the number of slaves in the United States had grown to 700,000—200,000 more than in 1776.

DAUGHTERS OF LIBERTY

REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN

The revolutionary generation included numerous women who contributed to the struggle for independence. Deborah Sampson, the daughter of a poor Massachusetts farmer, disguised herself as a man and in 1782, at age twenty-one, enlisted in the Continental army. Sampson displayed remarkable courage, participating in several battles and extracting a bullet from her own leg so as not to have a doctor discover her identity. Ultimately, her commanding officer discovered her secret but kept it to himself, and she was honorably discharged at the end of the war. Years later, Congress

awarded her a soldier's pension. Other patriotic women participated in crowd actions against merchants accused of seeking profits by holding goods off the market until their prices rose, contributed homespun goods to the army, and passed along information about British army movements.

In Philadelphia, Esther Reed, the wife of patriot leader Joseph Reed, and Sarah Franklin Bache, the daughter of Benjamin Franklin, organized a Ladies' Association to raise funds to assist American soldiers. They issued public broadsides calling for the "women of America" to name a "Treasurer" in each county in the United States who would collect funds and forward them to the governor's wife or, if he were unmarried, to "Mistress Washington." Referring to themselves as "brave Americans" who had been "born for liberty," the Ladies' Association illustrated how the Revolution was propelling women into new forms of public activism.

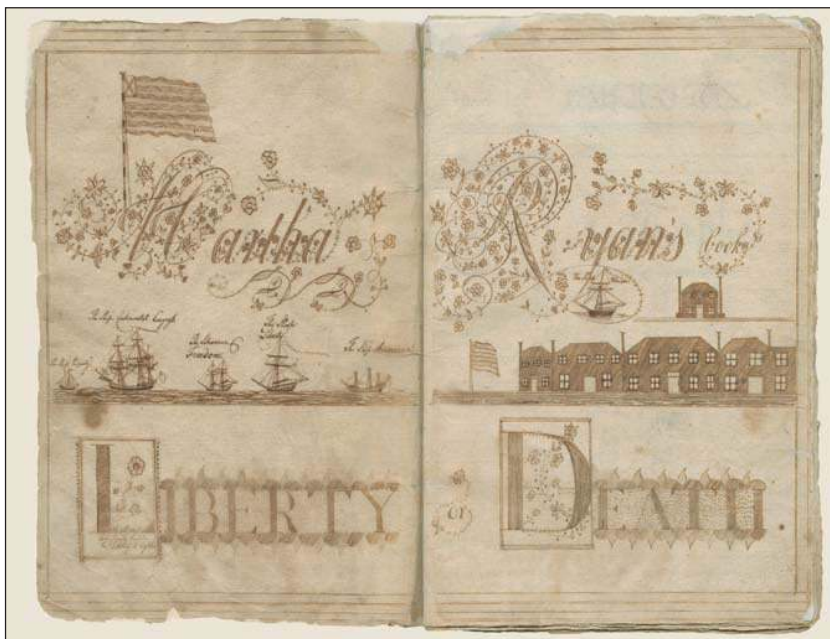
Within American households, women participated in the political discussions unleashed by independence. "Was not every fireside," John Adams later recalled, "a theater of politics?" Adams's own wife, Abigail Adams, as has been mentioned, was a shrewd analyst of public affairs. Mercy Otis Warren—the sister of James Otis and husband of James Warren, a founder of the Boston Committee of Correspondence—was another commentator on politics. She promoted the revolutionary cause in poems and dramas and later published a history of the struggle for independence.

GENDER AND POLITICS

Gender, nonetheless, formed a boundary limiting those entitled to the full blessings of American freedom. Lucy Knox, the wife of General Henry Knox, wrote her husband during the war that when he returned home he should not consider himself "commander in chief of your own house, but be convinced that there is such a thing as equal command." But the winning of independence did not alter the family law inherited from Britain. The principle of "coverture" (described in Chapter 1) remained intact in the new



In this painting from 1797, Deborah Sampson, who donned men's clothes to fight in the War of Independence, is portrayed in genteel female attire.



The 1781 cipher book (a notebook for mathematics exercises) of Martha Ryan, a North Carolina girl, contains images of ships and a port town and the patriotic slogan "Liberty or Death," illustrating how women shared in the political culture of the revolutionary era.



Keep Within Compass, a late-eighteenth-century engraving, illustrates the happiness of a “virtuous woman” if she remains within the world of the home and family, and some of the “troubles” awaiting her if she ventures outside. The woman appears in a space marked off by a compass, an instrument for drawing a circle.

nation. The husband still held legal authority over the person, property, and choices of his wife. The words “to have and to hold” appeared in deeds conveying land from one owner to another, and in common marriage vows. Despite the expansion of democracy, politics remained overwhelmingly a male realm.

For men, political freedom meant the right to self-government, the power to consent to the individuals and political arrangements that ruled over them. For women, however, the marriage contract superseded the social contract. A woman’s relationship to the larger society was mediated through her relationship with her husband. In both law and social reality, women lacked the essential qualification of political participation—the opportunity for autonomy based on ownership of property or control of one’s own person. Since the common law included women within the legal status of their husbands, women could not be said to have property in themselves in the same sense as men.

Men took pride in qualities like independence and masculinity that distinguished them from women, and still considered control over their families an element of freedom. Among the deprivations of slavery cited by a group of black male petitioners in 1774 was that it prevented their wives from “submitting themselves to husbands in all things,” as the natural order of the universe required. Many women who entered public debate felt

the need to apologize for their forthrightness. A group of Quaker women who petitioned Congress during the War of Independence protesting the mistreatment of men who would not take an oath of loyalty hoped the lawmakers would “take no offense at the freedom of women.”

Most men considered women to be naturally submissive and irrational, and therefore unfit for citizenship. While public debate in the revolutionary era viewed men’s rights as natural entitlements, discussions of women’s roles emphasized duty and obligations, not individual liberty. Their rights were nonpolitical, deriving from their roles as wives and mothers.

Overall, the republican citizen was, by definition, male. In a notable case, a Massachusetts court returned to James Martin confiscated property previously owned by his mother, who had fled the state during the Revolution with her Loyalist husband. Like other states, Massachusetts seized the land of those who had supported the British. But, the court ruled, it was unreasonable to expect a wife to exercise independent political judgment. To rebel against the king was one thing, but one could hardly ask Mrs. Martin to rebel against her husband. Therefore, the court reasoned, she should not have been punished for taking the British side.

REPUBLICAN MOTHERHOOD

The Revolution nonetheless did produce an improvement in status for many women. According to the ideology of “republican motherhood” that emerged as a result of independence, women played an indispensable role by training future citizens. The “foundation of national morality,” wrote John Adams, “must be laid in private families.” Even though republican motherhood ruled out direct female involvement in politics, it encouraged the expansion of educational opportunities for women, so that they could

impart political wisdom to their children. Women, wrote Benjamin Rush, needed to have a “suitable education,” to enable them to “instruct their sons in the principles of liberty and government.”

The idea of republican motherhood reinforced the trend, already evident in the eighteenth century, toward the idea of “companionate” marriage, a voluntary union held together by affection and mutual dependency rather than male authority. In her letter to John Adams quoted above, Abigail Adams recommended that men should willingly give up “the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend.”

The structure of family life itself was altered by the Revolution. In colonial America, those living within the household often included indentured servants, apprentices, and slaves. After independence, southern slaves remained, rhetorically at least, members of the owner’s “family.” In the North, however, with the rapid decline of various forms of indentured servitude and apprenticeship, a more modern definition of the household as consisting of parents and their children took hold. Hired workers, whether domestic servants or farm laborers, were not considered part of the family.

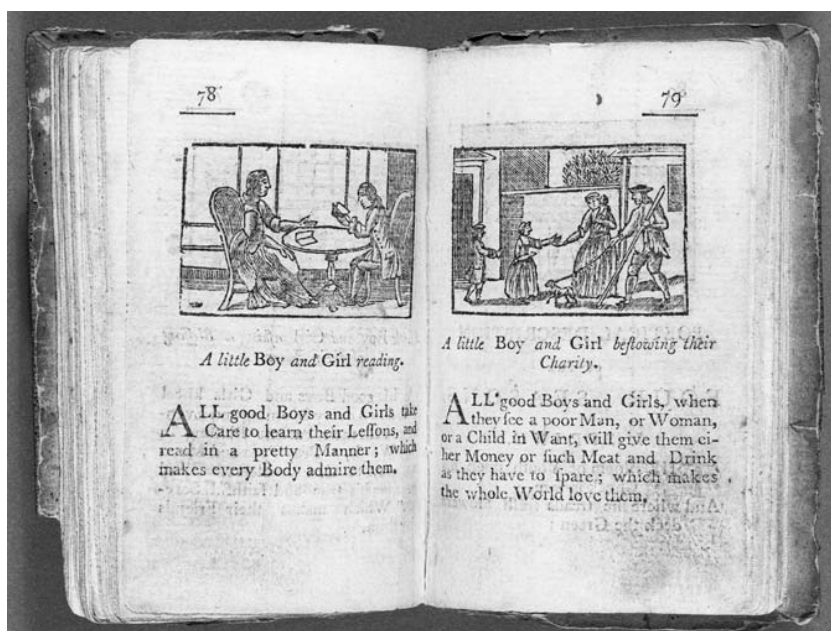
Like slaves, some free women adapted the rhetoric of the Revolution to their own situation. Ann Baker Carson later recalled how she became estranged from the tyrannical husband she had married at age sixteen. “I was an American,” she wrote. “A land of liberty had given me birth. I felt myself his equal.” She left the marriage rather than continue as a “female slave.” But unlike the case of actual slaves, the subordination of women did not become a major source of public debate until long after American independence.



Portrait of John and Elizabeth Lloyd Cadwalader and Their Daughter Anne. This 1772 portrait of a prominent Philadelphia businessman and his family by the American artist Charles Willson Peale illustrates the emerging ideal of the “companionate” marriage, which is based on affection rather than male authority.

THE ARDUOUS STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY

The Revolution changed the lives of virtually every American. As a result of the long struggle against British rule, the public sphere, and with it the



Two pages from *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly (1787), which taught virtuous behavior to young children. The Revolution stimulated interest in improving female education.

America Triumphant and Britannia in Distress. An elaborate allegory representing American independence as a triumph of liberty, from an almanac published in Boston in 1781. An accompanying key explains the symbolism: (1) America [on the right] holds an olive branch of peace and invites all nations to trade with her. (2) News of America's triumph is broadcast around the world. (3) Britain, seated next to the devil, laments the loss of trade with America. (4) The British flag falls from a fortress. (5) European ships in American waters. (6) Benedict Arnold, the traitor, hangs himself in New York City [in fact, Arnold died of natural causes in London in 1801].



right to vote, expanded markedly. Bound labor among whites declined dramatically, religious groups enjoyed greater liberty, blacks mounted a challenge to slavery in which many won their freedom, and women in some ways enjoyed a higher status. On the other hand, for Indians, many Loyalists, and the majority of slaves, American independence meant a deprivation of freedom.

In the words of one British admirer, “the genuine liberty on which America is founded is totally and entirely a new system of things and men.” A new nation, which defined itself as an embodiment of freedom, had taken its place on the world stage. “Not only Britain, but all Europe are spectators of the conflict, the arduous struggle for liberty,” wrote Ezra Stiles, a future president of Yale College, in 1775. “We consider ourselves as laying the foundation of a glorious future empire, and acting a part for the contemplation of the ages.”

Like Stiles, many other Americans were convinced that their struggle for independence had worldwide significance. American independence, indeed, formed part of a larger set of movements that transformed the Atlantic world. The year 1776 saw not only Paine’s *Common Sense* and Jefferson’s Declaration but also the publication in England of Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, which attacked the British policy of closely regulating trade, and Jeremy Bentham’s *Fragment on Government*, which criticized the nature of British government.

The winds of change were sweeping across the Atlantic world. The ideals of the American Revolution helped to inspire countless subsequent struggles for social equality and national independence, from the French Revolution, which exploded in 1789, to the uprising that overthrew the slave system in Haiti in the 1790s, to the Latin American wars for independence in the early nineteenth century, and numerous struggles of colonial peoples for nationhood in the twentieth. But within the new republic, the debate over who should enjoy the blessings of liberty would continue long after independence had been achieved.

SUGGESTED READING**BOOKS**

- Berkin, Carol. *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for American Independence* (2005). Presents profiles of women who took part in the movement for independence.
- Boulton, Terry. *Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (2007). Argues that the democratic impulse unleashed by the War of Independence was to some extent reversed by the events of the 1780s.
- Brown, Wallace. *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (1969). A study of Americans who remained loyal to Great Britain during the War of Independence.
- Calloway, Colin. *The American Revolution in Indian Country* (1995). Examines how the Revolution affected Indians in each region of the United States.
- Davis, David Brion. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (1975). An influential study of the emergence of slavery as a major public issue in the Atlantic world.
- Doerflinger, Thomas M. *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (1986). Explores how Philadelphia merchants participated in and reacted to the upheavals of the revolutionary era.
- Frey, Sylvia R. *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (1991). A study of the many ways blacks sought to gain freedom for themselves during the Revolution.
- Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989). A comprehensive account of the Revolution's impact on religion, and its aftermath.
- Holton, Woody. *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (1999). Explores how the struggles of those outside Virginia's elite contributed to the movement for independence.
- Kruman, Marc. *Between Authority and Liberty: State Constitution Making in Revolutionary America* (1997). The most detailed account of how state constitutions were changed during the era.
- Nash, Gary. *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (2005). Emphasizes the role of ordinary Americans in the struggle for independence.
- Schama, Simon. *Rough Crossing: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (2006). A detailed look at the experience of the thousands of slaves who escaped to British lines and their fate after the end of the War of Independence.
- Taylor, Alan. *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (2006). Examines the Revolution and its consequence in the Iroquois region of upstate New York.
- Wood, Gordon. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992). An influential work that sees the Revolution as transforming a hierarchical society into a democratic one.

WEBSITES

- Creating the United States: <http://myloc.gov/exhibitions/creatingtheus/Pages/default.aspx>
- Religion and the Founding of the American Republic: www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/religion.html
- The Geography of Slavery in Virginia: www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/



CHAPTER REVIEW

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Colonial society was based on inequality and obedience to authority. How did the American Revolution challenge the existing order of society?
2. Why did the Revolution cause more radical changes in Pennsylvania than elsewhere, and how was this radicalism demonstrated in the new state constitution?
3. Even after the American Revolution, conservatives denied that freedom and equality were synonymous, and opposed the growth of democracy. How did conservatives resist democratization in the South?
4. What role did the founders foresee for religion in American government and society?
5. What was the impact of the American Revolution on Native Americans?
6. What were the most important features of the new state constitutions?
7. How did popular views of property rights and the marriage contract prevent women and slaves from enjoying all the freedoms of the social contract?
8. What was “republican motherhood,” and why was it significant?



FREEDOM QUESTIONS

1. Revolutions create change, challenge authority, and embolden marginalized groups to apply revolutionary ideals to their own situation. How did slaves, indentured servants, women, and Native Americans use the ideals of freedom to further their causes?
2. Wartime patriots insisted that freedom of conscience was a key part of liberty. What steps were taken to protect religious freedom, and did this freedom apply to everyone?
3. Before the American Revolution, Americans commonly held that the role of government was to promote the public good. After the war, merchants and other leaders advocated free trade and free markets, ruled by self-interest, as an expression of freedom. How did this new concept of freedom for some Americans deprive others of their freedoms?
4. Patriots claimed to be fighting a war to protect liberty and freedom in America, yet these ideas did not apply to everyone. How did Loyalists and Native Americans suffer, and why were their “natural rights” not protected?
5. “Slavery” and “liberty” were the two most frequently used terms in the debate over freedom. How did they apply to the political rights of white property owners, but then mean something entirely different when referring to African-Americans held as property?



KEY TERMS

- one-house legislature (p. 223)
- Thoughts on Government* (p. 224)
- balanced government (p. 224)
- suffrage (p. 225)
- “wall of separation” (p. 227)
- Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom (p. 228)
- free labor (p. 231)
- free trade (p. 232)
- inflation (p. 232)
- Loyalists (p. 233)
- Stockbridge Indians (p. 236)
- General John Sullivan (p. 237)
- abolition (p. 239)
- freedom petitions (p. 241)
- Lemuel Haynes (p. 241)
- free blacks (p. 248)
- “citizens of color” (p. 248)
- republican motherhood (p. 250)
- “suitable education” (p. 251)

REVIEW TABLE

Freedom and the State Constitutions

Provision	States
Eliminated property qualification for voting	All states except Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina
Eliminated all property and tax qualifications for voting	Vermont
Granted vote to free blacks who met qualifications	All states except Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia
One-house state government	Pennsylvania, Georgia, Vermont
Two-house state government	All states except Pennsylvania, Georgia, Vermont
Guaranteed complete religious liberty	New York
Deprived governor of veto power	All states except Massachusetts
Established annual elections to increase accountability	All states except North Carolina